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# THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

APRIL 1st, 1862.

## LIFE AND LABOURS OF VINCENT NOVELLO.

By MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

(Concluded from page 203.)

THE difficulty of publishing such works as were the early compositions and arrangements of Vincent Novello, can hardly be appreciated at the present day. Publishers could not then be found to run the risk; and the expenses of engraving and printing had to be provided for by himself out of his hard earnings. At the same time, he had almost to create the taste for such music among the public, by the production and execution of them in his own choir at South Street.

The separate accompaniments for the organ or pianoforte, which are so familiar in the present day, were quite the exception in the early part of this century. Vincent Novello's works were among the first where a definite part was printed for the accompanist. Previously, vocal scores had only a line with the bass part, having the addition of figures to indicate the harmonies; and the melodies of the various parts had to be gathered and adapted to the instrument, as the performance proceeded.

Vincent Novello's first work, "Sacred Music in two volumes," dedicated to the Rev. Victor Fryer, was received with very great favor. It was compiled from the music which had been most appreciated among that which had been collected in manuscript for the use of the choir at South Street; and comprised several long compositions of his own, including the "Salve Regina," "Alma Redemptoris," and other complete pieces, as well as the portions which he added to what is called "The Selected Mass." The Sanctus and Benedictus for five voices, and Hosanna fugue—a composition which he had completed before his eighteenth year—may be pointed out as a specimen of remarkable beauty in five-part vocal composition.

"Twelve Easy Masses" for small choirs were published shortly after; of which three are original compositions by himself; and the rest by Spanish, Portuguese, and other authors.

Two more works were commenced in books, appearing from time to time over a considerable period, entitled "Motetts for the Morning Service," and "The Evening Service." These contain many of Vincent Novello's original compositions, which have remained constant favorites in the choirs of the Catholic Church, for whose services they were composed.

The compositions of Vincent Novello are very numerous, and many are of important length; but they are much dispersed amid his various

Collections, and they have been to a certain degree overshadowed by his still more abundant arrangements. His reputation as a composer would probably have been greater than it is, had he confined himself to the publication of his own compositions alone; but all his works were produced for special utility: and, bearing that object more in view than personal renown, he supplied the composition most adapted to the service required, without regard to whether it were composed by himself or another. Perhaps the secret of the success of his early publications, was not only their musical merit; but, that being compiled from the books of his own choir, they were all pieces which had had the previous sanction of successful performance.

The chief of his musical compositions are to sacred words; but he has also produced some very approved compositions to secular words—songs, canzonets, glees, and choruses. In 1833 the Manchester Prize for the best cheerful glee was awarded to his glee, "Old May Morning;" at the same time that Sir Henry Bishop obtained the prize for the best serious glee.

"The Infant's Prayer," a recitative and air, enjoyed a very extended popularity; there having been sold of it upwards of seventy thousand copies; and it is still in demand for school teaching, from its pleasing and sterling merits.

The Philharmonic Society having requested Vincent Novello to supply their concerts with an original cantata of his composition, he wrote for them the "Rosalba;" which contains soprano and contralto solos, a quartet and chorus, with full orchestral accompaniments.

The attention which Vincent Novello gave to psalmody, during some years of his life, tended very greatly to improve that simple branch of devotional music. Various denominations of Christians applied to him to revise and renew their collections; and how well he accomplished their requests by the harmonization of their tunes—avoiding extreme chords, yet ever maintaining a solid ecclesiastical harmony, flowing and melodious inner parts, combined with the utmost simplicity—is proved by the steadfast use made of them in the multitude of churches and chapels where the various collections edited by him have been adopted. He was often desired by professional friends to contribute original psalm tunes to their collections; and those he wrote for them are among the continued favorites of the congregations. In his latter days he made a manuscript assemblage of all these contributed psalm tunes, with a view to their being brought out in a collected form; but the work has not yet been published. They are a hundred and fifty original psalm tunes; two hundred and fifty adaptations of melodies by others; and a hundred single and double chants. It is hoped that the publication of the original psalm tunes and chants may still take place at an early period, if it should be found desirable.

A simple enumeration of the various works of Vincent Novello would imply the reprinting almost the whole of the large catalogue of the Dean Street House, extending to two hundred pages; and, in addition to these, he edited several important works for other publishers. It must therefore suffice to make a brief mention of some of those whose appearance had an influential effect upon the music of the period.

Among these must certainly rank the edition of Mozart's and Haydn's Masses. When this was commenced, the published Masses of Mozart were eight, including the Requiem; and of Haydn, seven. These works were to be had only in full orchestral score, without separate accompaniment for the organ; and these full scores were printed only abroad. From great research, and by the kind aid of those who possessed manuscript scores, Vincent Novello was enabled to publish eighteen Masses of Mozart and sixteen of Haydn. These are not only printed in vocal score, with separate accompaniment, but also the separate orchestral and vocal parts are printed for the use of orchestras. Nothing has contributed more to the diffusion of good music than the printing of parts for orchestras; and those who revel in the abundance of the present day (who may be supplied by the publisher, at the last moment, for a few pence), are not aware what were the previous difficulties of getting up even a small performance of classical music with accompaniment: when manuscript parts had to be made with much labor, uncertainty, and delay, from scores to be procured only by favor from a few amateur libraries.

About the year 1824 Vincent Novello was requested by the authorities of the Fitzwilliam Museum, at Cambridge, to examine and report on the large collection of musical manuscripts which were in their library: and he spent considerable time in doing so; making several visits to Cambridge, at his own expense, for that purpose. The ancient Italian school had his chief attention; and a portion of the result of his researches he published, consisting of selections from Bonno, Bononcini, Cafaro, Carissimi, Clari, Colonna, Conti, Durante, Feroce, Jomelli, Leo, Lupi, L. Da Vittoria, Martini, Orlando di Lasso, Palestrina, Pergolesi, Perti, Stradella, &c. Only about one-third of the extracts he thus made were published; but fine specimens, calculated to fill ten volumes more, were copied from the library, and still remain in manuscript.

The commercial difficulties and uncertainties of success, which had to be encountered in the earlier publications, having given place about 1825 to a steady demand for every new work that had the advantage of bearing the name of Vincent Novello as editor, made the continuous flow of important works to be limited only by his industry; and the brief enumeration of the titles of the more valuable works which appeared up to 1840, will show how great that industry must have been.

"Purcell's Sacred Works" was a labour of much research and collation; as the larger portion had remained in manuscript, dispersed in the choir-books of different cathedrals, or rare copies in the collections of individuals. Vincent Novello presented the original manuscript copy he made of this work to the British Museum; for, contrary to wont, it was in beautifully preservable form. The majority of his manuscripts (especially latterly), though most neatly and legibly written, were jotted down upon such mere odds and ends of music-paper, and generally stitched together (or rather, *threaded* together, like a file of papers), that they served but to be used by the printer, and then were thrown away or destroyed.

To Boyce's celebrated Collection of Cathedral Music in three volumes, was not only added a separate organ part, but the same was reprinted in separate vocal parts. Similar organ parts were added by him to the four volumes of Boyce's own anthems, to the anthems and services of Greene, Croft, Kent, Clarke Whitfield, and Nares; and all these were likewise edited by him in single vocal parts.

The "Cathedral Choir Book," a collection of music (in cheap and varied forms) selected from various sources by himself, was another contribution to the large library of that branch of music which he edited.

A careful revision of the fourteen principal oratorios by Handel, included a separate accompaniment to each oratorio; editing the original orchestral and choral parts; adding to *Judas Maccabæus* additional wind parts; and superintending the cheap octavo editions of the scores.

Similar editions of Haydn's *Creation*, *Seasons*, *Passione*, *Tempesta*; and other oratorios by Romberg, Spohr, Himmel, Biery, Graun, &c., he produced in a variety of forms. Masses, cantatas, litanies, &c., by Beethoven, Hummel, Cherubini, Weber, Spohr, Bühler, Fenoglio, Rossini, and Zingarelli, comprise long works for which he arranged separate accompaniments, and which he edited in various forms.

In the shape of pianoforte arrangements for four hands, Vincent Novello familiarized several favorite operatic pieces of classical authors. His pianoforte duets from Mozart's *Figaro*, *Idomeneo*, and *Così fan tutte*; and from Spohr's *Faust*, *Jessonda*, and *Zemire and Azor*, obtained favour; while the latter may be said to have served first to introduce Spohr's opera music to English knowledge.

Three extensive works for the use of organists, as voluntaries, or where voices are not at command, have been found of especial utility; if we may estimate by the very great sale they have obtained. They are:—The "Select Organ Pieces," three large volumes; the "Cathedral Voluntaries," in two volumes; and the "Short Melodies," in one volume.

Vincent Novello had the rare privilege of

completing and giving to the public during his lifetime most of the more important works which he had undertaken; among the exceptions to this rule, however, was one of considerable volume, of which no part has yet been published. He proposed to set to original or selected music the words appointed to be sung at the "Offertory" (a portion of the Roman Catholic Service) for every Festival contained in the Missal during the ecclesiastical year. Of the several series therein contained, about eighty have been completed for those festivals distinguished as "Pro Tempore;" and these were engraved and corrected ready for press. It is intended to give what are completed to the public at an early period.

No man was more successful than Vincent Novello in producing music in forms that placed it within reach of the least wealthy. He may be said to have created both demand and supply; for, by his early efforts he introduced little-known works of great masters, thereby originating a taste and desire for them; and, by his persevering toil, continued to bring them forth in such abundance and usable shape, that they became necessities not only to musicians, but aspirants in musical cultivation. Out of this abundance and usability grew the requisite cheapness which should place these sterling works within command of the large class of users that had been rendered so extensive; and thus, numerous demand and numerous supply alike arose from Vincent Novello's earnest devotion to his art.

He had no bigotry in music. His wide-embracing appreciation had love for all really *good* music, whatever its peculiar character. From the ancient stores of Palestrina or old Gregorian music, to the modern opera or glee,—from each and all, the industry of Vincent Novello was ever culling and printing in serviceable form the best portions; and a musical library constituted alone of the works edited by Vincent Novello would in itself comprise a very varied collection of all the best styles of music.

Vincent Novello's personal appearance is well indicated by the portrait given at the commencement of the present biographical sketch. The original picture was one of his son Edward's first attempts in oil painting; and is a beautiful specimen of taste in colouring (the young artist had never had a single lesson in colouring), with fidelity in feature, figure, and expression. The position of the head, the attitude, the shape and look of the hand, are all true; and Mr. G. De Wilde's engraving has preserved these particulars of resemblance. Vincent Novello's stature was about middle height; his person somewhat stout; his carriage and walk wonderfully energetic and purposeful; his hands and feet remarkably small and white. On a certain occasion, the shapeliness and delicacy of these latter were made obvious; when, going down to

the shore to meet her father returning from a morning plunge in the sea, one of his daughters saw him take off his shoe and shake out the sand that had drifted in, leaving his fair stockingless foot revealed to view. No one seeing his boots or shoes would have guessed the small size of his foot; for he wore them of a magnitude more suited to a slipper-bath than to human dimensions. He said he liked to have them *easy*; and the consequence was that they might have accommodated any amount of sea-sand in addition to the foot they shod, giving ready admission to whatever quantity chose to lodge there. His clothes were of an equally (what he called) *commodious* make; and his cravat was always tied loosely enough to allow of his chin, as well as his throat, reposing roomily therein. He was early bald; losing the chief portion of his hair when he was no older than six-and-twenty. It preserved its brown colour for many years; and only latterly turned grey.

His manners, when in good health, were social, gay, and lively. Fond of conversation, he talked well and freely, when with those he intimately knew; but he was retiring—nay, shy—with strangers. He had a good deal of English reserve in his bearing towards those whom he met for the first time; though it wore off on acquaintance, and vanished altogether when he took a liking to them. He had a certain quiet pride, common to very modest men; conscious of innate merit, yet averse from self-assertion. With his chosen friends he was easy, genial, cordial. With them he gave way to mirth and good-fellowship; laughed, bantered, punned. He was a great punster; and vied honorably with Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, and Henry Robertson,—those masters in the art of punning.

Vincent Novello was no vocalist; but once he was heard to sing. He was trying over some concerted piece from the score of "Don Giovanni;" the part of Leporello was unsupplied, and he murmured the notes required. There was not much *voice*; but the intervals taken truly, the phrases well phrased, the spirit of the music exquisitely given—bore witness to the *musician's* singing.

His care in arranging—either the separate accompaniment for organ and pianoforte, or for four-hand duets—was manifested by (among other things) the minute pains he took to make the passages "lie well under the hand." Often would the pen be placed between the lips, while the fingers were spread and moved over the table as if in the act of playing; so that he might mechanically test the most facile and best mode of arranging the phrase under consideration. In "laying out" works for printing, also, he spared no trouble in devising favorable turnings, with well-spaced bars, lines, and pages; and frequently, when dividing his manuscripts for this purpose, he would count up, with slight raps of his pencil on the paper, asking half aloud:—

“How many sevens in fifty?” And when the reply came from some one of those sitting quietly near him, he would reply:—“Ay, it must be so-and-so.

Vincent Novello was what is called short-sighted; that is, he used a glass to distinguish far-off objects. But his sight was so naturally strong, that he could see to read a small print with a very slender allowance of light in the room, even at an advanced age; and during the twelvemonth preceding the last year of his life, he wrote some autographs at the request of his eldest daughter, which were as clearly and steadily penned as his signature had ever been.

She had the inestimable privilege of being with him night and day through his final illness at Nice. It was without pain; he was patient, gentle, affectionate, longing for rest. This was granted to him on the evening of the 9th of August, 1861. Had he lived until the 6th of the following month, September, he would have been eighty years of age. After a life of unsparing industry, with the blessing of beholding his labors achieve honorable success in advancing the art he loved so devotedly, his end was crowned by peace.

The most proper monument to a useful man's memory is that which he has himself erected in the works he leaves behind him. But if ever a cenotaph be erected in England to the memory of Vincent Novello, the most appropriate site for it would be in Westminster Abbey; an edifice he loved so well, and which he at one time made the termination of his daily walk, to “go in and hear the anthem.” His well-known place was a seat in the aisle, where Poet's Corner abuts upon the door to the cloister. The old vergers called it “Mr. Novello's seat;” and pointed it out to his Italian grandchildren when they came to England and visited the Abbey in 1860. There could hardly be a more fitting spot than the neighbourhood of this seat for placing a tablet-record of how much this eminent musician and estimable man contributed to the improvement of cathedral music.

### Brief Chronicle of the last Month.

ABERDEEN.—On the 27th of February, the Aberdeen Music-hall Choral Union gave a performance of Haydn's oratorio, *The Creation*, when the following soloists were engaged, namely—Mrs. Sunderland, Mr. George Perren, and Herr Formes. The local band was augmented by several players from Glasgow and Edinburgh; the band and chorus numbering altogether about 300. The choruses generally were sung with much precision and effect. Mr. Latter conducted; Mr. Baker was organist; and Mr. McLewee, of Glasgow, officiated as leader of the band.—The oratorio was followed by a miscellaneous concert on Friday, the 28th, when an attractive programme was presented. There were good attendances on both occasions; and the performances were financially, as well as musically, successful.

ALVERSTOKE (Hants).—A social gathering of the friends and members of the Old Scholars' Improvement Society, of this place, was held in the National School-room on the 24th of February. A selection of music was performed

by the band with much taste, and several pieces were sung in good style. Mr. Misselbrook accompanied; and Mr. C. Pook was conductor.

ANDOVER.—The Choral Society of this place performed a selection of sacred and secular choruses at the Town-hall, on the 4th ult.

BARDSLEY.—The second annual tea-party, in connection with the Working Men's Reading-room, took place in the Church School-room, on Saturday, March 1st. During the evening, the choral society of this village, under the direction of Mr. S. Mills, sang several glees with precision. Mr. S. Mills accompanied the songs on the pianoforte. Votes of thanks were given to the society, the conductor, and the chairman.

BATTLE.—The Mountfield Choral Society's last concert was given here on Tuesday, March 18th. The first part embraced selections from the *Messiah*, *Samson*, *Judas Maccabæus*, *Creation*, *St. Paul*, and *Elijah*; and the second part, the usual medley of songs, glees, choruses, duets, &c., including a simple part-song, “It is May,” composed by the conductor, Mr. J. Wiseman. The principal singers were Misses Wiseman and Jenner, and Messrs. Wiseman and Heath. Mr. Thompson, of Hastings, presided at the piano.

BELFAST.—The *Creation* was given on the 3rd ult., in the Victoria-hall, by the members of the Classical Harmonists' Society, assisted by Miss Whitham, and Messrs. Thomas and Whitehead. The accompaniments were well played by the Society, and the choruses were sung with steadiness. Mr. Allen conducted; and Mr. Edeson presided at the organ.—On the 18th ult., a Soirée, in connexion with the United Church Young Men's Society, was held in the Victoria-hall, which was crowded to excess. The members of the choir sung a variety of sacred anthems and choruses, with an organ accompaniment, and acquitted themselves with credit. Mr. May presided at the organ.

BIRMINGHAM.—A new oratorio, composed by Mr. Francis Howell, entitled *The Captivity*, was given at the Town-hall on the 13th ult., by the members of the Festival Chorus Society, who had taken great pains to render themselves efficient in the music. The principal vocalists were engaged from London. The local press speak highly of the merits of the oratorio.

BLACKBURN.—The twelfth of a series of Saturday Evening Free Popular Lectures and entertainments was given in the Rechabites-hall on the 8th ult., when a few songs, recitations, readings, dialogues, and performances by the band, comprised the evening's amusements. The hall was crowded to excess long before the appointed time.

BRISTOL.—A concert took place in the lecture-hall of the Athenæum, on the 4th ult., in aid of the funds for the relief of the families of the two poor fellows killed in the recent colliery accident at Kingwood. The programme was miscellaneous, and many performers took part in the music, which was very creditably executed.—On the 17th ult. a new organ was opened at Gideon Chapel, Newfoundland-street. Mr. Carter, organist of Nicholas Church, presided at the instrument, which was built by Mr. Allen, of King's-square Avenue. There was a large and effective choir upon the occasion.

BURSLEM (Staffordshire).—The Potteries Tonic Solfa-ists repeated Mozart's 12th Mass in the Town-hall, on the 25th of February, to an audience of 800, with 200 voices, and a band of twenty-seven instruments. Mr. Powell, conductor; Mr. Cadman, leader. About 130 of the same choristers sang the Service again in the Wesleyan Chapel, Longton, on the 10th of March; Mr. Powell conducting, and Mr. Sherwin accompanying on the organ.

CAERMARTHEN.—An Eisteddfod, or Welsh competitive concert, was held here on Monday, 3rd of March; the Rev. Dr. Lloyd in the chair.—Mr. W. H. Whitaker, organist of St. Peter's Church, gave his benefit concert on Tuesday, the 4th.—A NEW English Wesleyan Chapel